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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [IV](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: FRENCH WELCOME DEMARCHE ON GBAGBO

REF: STATE 42762

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Embassy Africa watcher met March 15 with Nathalie Delapalme, FM Barnier's Africa advisor, to share the elements of the demarche on Ivoirian President Gbagbo (reftel) and to discuss the situation in Cote d'Ivoire generally.

2. (C) Delapalme welcomed the demarche on Gbagbo, noting that France had also found it necessary to take a stronger line with Gbagbo regarding his responsibility for the actions of militia groups. She also commented favorably on the USG points on the way forward, noting that criticizing Gbagbo without showing him a plan for addressing issues was unproductive. Delapalme agreed that Gbagbo should be reminded that it was in his power as head of state to move events forward, rather than continue to complain about the failures of the opposition. Gbagbo, she said, had difficulty in abandoning his oppositionist's mentality in favor of acting as a national leader.

3. (C) Delapalme revealed that FM Barnier had had a one-on-one meeting with Gbagbo while in Lome for the funeral of Togolese President Eyadema. She declined to speculate what may have been said, noting that Barnier was a latecomer (i.e. not involved in Marcoussis) to Ivoirian affairs. Delapalme took the opportunity to comment that it was Barnier who was maintaining communication with Gbagbo, as President Chirac and Gbagbo had not spoken since the FANCI attack on French forces in Bouake in November.

4. (C) Africa watcher and Delapalme reviewed the familiar disconnect between USG and French thinking with regard to ONUCI. We noted that our support for ONUCI had, from the outset, been contingent on progress on the political front. With the parties making little progress, and showing less good faith, it would be difficult to support a large increase in ONUCI force levels or additional tasks. Delapalme presented the French view that having ONUCI engage on planning for elections, DDR, and generally creating a context of security could encourage the parties to move forward. Delapalme also noted the imbalance between the force levels approved for UNAMSIL and UNAMIL and that approved for ONUCI. She continued that she feared that conditions were being created whereby combatants could continue to receive UN DDR funds in one country for weapons which could be cheaply replaced with the replacements being turned in for DDR funds in a neighboring country.

5. (C) We sought to draw Delapalme out on the issue of the continued presence in Cote d'Ivoire of French Licorne forces. In particular, we queried whether President Chirac's comments in Senegal about France remaining only if the Ivoirian government so requested, had been designed to force an explicit request from Gbagbo. Delapalme was (even by her normally closed-lipped standards) cautious in her reply. France, she said, was not planning to withdraw, and had no desire to withdraw from Cote d'Ivoire. Licorne, she noted, was present as a UN-mandated force, and it was for the UN to decide whether or not Licorne should remain. She allowed, however, that a public demand by Gbagbo for Licorne's withdrawal would place the issue in a different context.

6. (C) Finally, we asked Delapalme whether she planned to meet with Gbagbo's advisor, Pastor Moise Kore. Delapalme acknowledged having met him previously, and was aware that Kore was in Paris, but said there had been no request in either direction for a meeting. Had Kore requested a meeting, Delapalme said, she would have declined.
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